

DILLARD UNIVERSITY

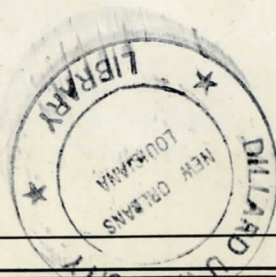
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

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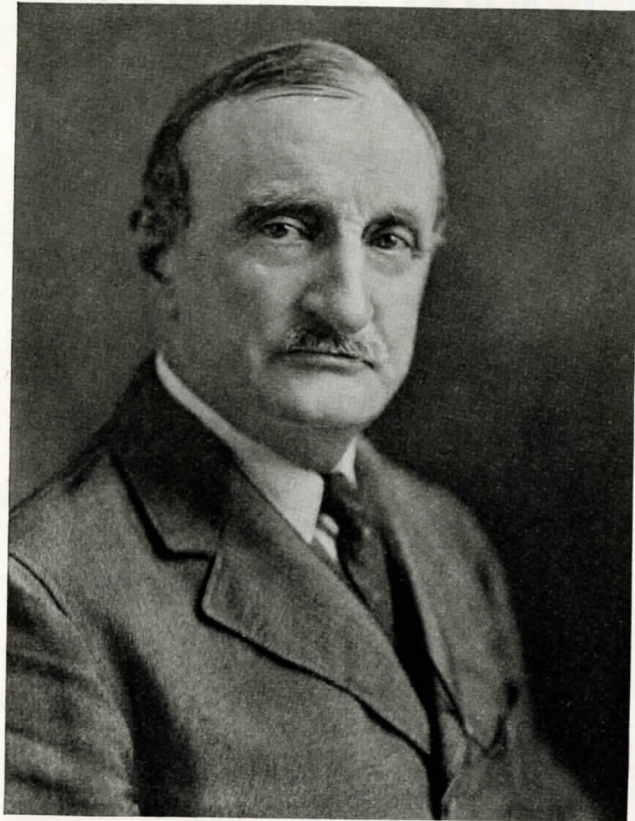
ADDRESSES

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MAY 27, 1934



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JAMES HARDY DILLARD

CORNER STONE LAYING

LIBRARY BUILDING

DILLARD UNIVERSITY

MAY TWENTY-SEVENTH

NINETEEN HUNDRED THIRTY-FOUR

THREE O'CLOCK



HYMN: AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

INVOCATION Reverend John B. Boyce
Pastor St. Luke's Episcopal Church

GREETINGS Honorable T. Semmes Walmsley
Mayor of New Orleans

ADDRESS Doctor Will W. Alexander
Acting President of the University

ADDRESS Mrs. Lucius R. Eastman
Member Administrative Committee,
American Missionary Association

ADDRESS Doctor Mordecai W. Johnson
President Howard University, Washington, D. C.

ADDRESS Doctor James Hardy Dillard

LAYING OF CORNER STONE
 { Bishop R. E. Jones
 Vice-President Board of Education,
 Methodist Episcopal Church
 Mr. Fred L. Brownlee
 Executive Secretary,
 American Missionary Association

NATIONAL NEGRO HYMN

BENEDICTION Doctor M. J. Holmes
Secretary Board of Education,
Methodist Episcopal Church

MR. EDGAR B. STERN

President, Board of Trustees

Presiding

The Meaning of Dillard University

By Mordecai W. Johnson

EVER since I heard of the launching of Dillard University I have been stirred with the deepest feeling of gladness, for I am of the opinion that the enterprise undertaken here and the spirit in which it is undertaken are among the most significant and constructive happenings that have taken place in the United States during this decade.

It would be of the highest possible significance to hear of the establishment of a first-class university center for Negroes in this great city of the deep South, under any auspices whatsoever. It is worth while to meditate upon the fact that less than seventy years ago the people for whose children this university is being organized were slaves on these very grounds.

And yet, within seventy years, the spirit of this nation has been so victorious over its past that, while men and women are still living who experienced the existence of slavery, we have come to celebrate here today the founding of a great university for the children of those slaves. It is probably true that a similar thing could not have been done in any other country in the world in so short a time.

A Sound Enterprise

It is significant in the second place that the founding of this university is now not merely a gesture. We have had the name "university" for a long time in the field of Negro education, but we can have an additional gladness today because this enterprise is based upon a solid, supporting educational structure.

Years ago, our devoted friends from the North came down with the announcement that they were going to build universities. Nobody knows better than they what a long struggle it was to lay the foundation of those structures. Many of them until this day have not been able to realize their dream.

But we are here about to lay the foundation of a university enterprise on the basis of a sound undergirding structure of elementary and secondary education—a structure inspired in large part by the very people who have developed Straight College and New Orleans University,

but built slowly and securely by the deliberate coöperation of the people of the municipality of New Orleans and of the State of Louisiana. There is some chance, therefore, that this university may put its feet solidly on the ground and make substantial progress from the moment you open its doors.

Great Things Within Reach

What throbs of gladness will come to the hearts of many Negro mothers and fathers during the next fifty years when they realize that the highest development of their sons and daughters is within reach of their limited pocket-books, because they will see a great university established at their doors.

Nobody can measure over a period of seventy years how much real genius of the Negro race has died without expression because Negro mothers and fathers wishing to give their children an education, have had to think of sending them to far-away places like Chicago, Cambridge, and Philadelphia. Their will has been good, their imagination great, but their resources too small.

There lies in this Southland today, buried in unmarked graves, many a black genius who would have blessed this city and this section of our country, if his parents could have had before them the Dillard University you are now building. My heart leaps up with great gladness for these mothers and fathers of the future.

But this enterprise, my friends, is decidedly significant for another reason that lies in the field of the spirit. The longer I work in the field of administration, the less and less confidence I have in the merely intellectual, and the more and more confidence I have in the spirit which animates institutions. This institution is launched in a spirit which in my judgment will be the inspiration of the Negro people and of the South for hundreds of years to come.

Mark you what we have here: an institution for the highest development of the children of slaves; under the leadership of a southern white man; with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees a southern white man; three or four of the ablest members of the Board southern white men, associating themselves with missionaries from the North—men and women whose ac-

tivities fifty years ago were in a doubtful category—associating themselves at the same time on the Board of Trustees with Negroes—southern Negroes and northern Negroes.

Here on the same faculty there are going to be southern white men and northern white men, and southern black men and northern black men, working side by side; and, undergirding them with a far-sighted sagacity and constructiveness that gives strength to their good will, is the thoughtful helpfulness of those great national educational foundations, the Julius Rosenwald Fund and the General Education Board.

If I were a visitor to this country and I wanted to see a group of human beings whose very presence together would be an inspiration to the human heart, I would want to come and see the trustees and faculty and supporters of this institution.

The Early Missionary

I cannot but think today of what this enterprise must mean to a silver-haired northern Christian missionary. I should like to think of that for a moment. Think of her! coming here fifty years ago to take up her place in one of these institutions, looked upon with doubt, sometimes suspicion, sometimes fear, by the very white neighbors whose confidence she most desired.

But she came down to devote herself to the spiritual emancipation of the children of slaves. Her religious belief gave her confidence that it could be done, and she came down. She knew only one kind of education. That was university education. She picked out the little nappy-headed Negro boys and girls and said, "I am going to give it to them."

For fifty years she worked, calling her school a university, but really carrying on a sixth grade and then a high school; talking about a university, with ideals away up in the sky, but with feet on the ground, teaching A B C's, arithmetic, and geography. But she believed that some day as a result of her efforts a real university would arise; that some day these students of hers would stand solidly on the ground in the South and prove themselves to be not only capable of being trained but also of being trusted; and she believed that some day,

if she were loyal to the spirit of the Master who sent her here, she would win the confidence of the Southern white people who held her in suspicion.

What She Sees Today

Imagine her gladness today! Within the span of a single lifetime, before the silence of the grave closes down upon her, she knows that her faith is justified. Her great spiritual adventure has come to a glorious conclusion. Here she sees in this institution the emergence of her real university.

She sees also the sons and daughters of southern white people coming out to take her by the hand, and she hears them saying, "We believe in what you have been doing. It is a good thing, and from now on we are going to help you carry it on."

She sees her graduates respected by the citizens of this country, South and North, and chosen to be members of the faculty and the Board of Trustees of Dillard University.

Her heart is filled with joy, and as a last gesture of courtesy expressive of her profound confidence and gladness she joins with the denomination which she has been opposing from the organization of the work and says, "Let us give up our identity. Let us cooperate with these southern white people, put our shoulders to the wheel, and see what we can do together."

If you are here today with your silver hair, I want you to know that your life will be an inspiration to black boys and girls as long as we are left on earth. We bless God for your name and memory, and nobody can thank him more than we do for the fact that you are standing here by the side of these southern white people, holding them by the hand.

White Men Take Responsibility

I want to comment, too, on the gladness which fills my heart when I see the southern white men who are working in this institution. I am glad that theirs is not merely a gesture. I have seen them turn loose their money. I have seen them come into this Board of Trustees and take responsibility. I have seen them confront their fellow citizens and say:

"This university is not a negligible issue with us, but a serious adventure for the welfare of

the Negro people and for our country, and we come before the people of New Orleans to ask you to support this adventure."

I know something of what it must mean to a southern white man to do this. I know something of the history of this country since reconstruction—of the terrible economic and social problems with which the southern white man has had to deal. I know how hard he has had to work. I can understand how when he begins to turn aside from the great problems confronting him and to think of something of this kind for Negroes he raises serious questions with himself:

"Do I really have time for this undertaking? Will the rest of my fellow-citizens understand and be helpful to me in it? Does the enterprise have a real chance of success?"

I can understand that with him it is a great adventure, and I rejoice that the adventure has been gone into with wholeheartedness—with the devotion of money and the acceptance of major official responsibility.

I want you to know, my friends, what that means to the Negroes of this country. I tell you that no man understands the Negro if he thinks that what we want to do is to be free from the South. No man understands the Negro if he thinks that.

What we want is merely to be free *in* the South. We want to rise to our maximum self-respect and spiritual freedom in the South by the consent and with the coöperation and helpfulness of the white people of the South.

And when we see these white people in the South in the leadership of this institution and on this Board of Trustees, we think we understand what it means.

"Sons of slaves, stand on your feet. We want to speak to you. We do not want to speak to you groveling there before us. We want to speak to you stretched up to your highest manhood. Stand up and respect yourselves. Let your mind be developed and your heart gladdened. Your brothers in white want to see you be real men on the soil where your fathers were slaves."

And I tell you, my friends, there is no suffering of an external kind which we have in the South today that is in any way to be compared to the internal suffering which we have as we look into the faces of our white brethren and find so few who salute our souls with profound respect.

But let us see on the streets of New Orleans and in every city of the South men and women who take the position that the leaders of this institution have taken. Then, I tell you that there is no external suffering so great, no patience required, too hard for us to endure so long as we know that you are working for us and with us in this direction.

Negroes On the Faculty

I am glad, too, that on this Board of Trustees and on this faculty Negroes are already members. That has a high significance to us. It would be a fine thing if southern white people and northern white people would just build an institution *for* Negroes. That would be good, but you have undertaken to build an institution *with* Negroes.

You are going into the wards with Negro physicians, working side by side with them for our Negro patients. You are going in the classroom with Negro professors and teachers. You are going into the conference room and making your plans with black men on the Board of Trustees.

That fills our hearts with great gladness. Nobody understands that gladness if he thinks that what Negroes enjoy is just being where white people are. What we enjoy is having the yoke on our shoulders in a common enterprise of importance to the entire community and to have you say, "Black men, pull hard, because we need you and you have got to help us put it over."

I shall never forget an old Negro woman in my church. She had worked all her life for \$1.50 a week and had saved \$1500. This she had hidden away in a bed tick. During the World War, Mr. Woodrow Wilson sent out a message and said to all the people—white and colored, rich and poor—

"This nation of ours is engaged in a struggle so terrific that all the reserve resources of the people need to be laid upon the altar of your country. If you have any savings, however small, your country needs them. Bring them out from their hiding place."

This colored woman brought out this \$1500, bought \$1000 worth of Liberty Bonds and \$500 worth of War Savings Stamps, and confined herself from that day to two little luxuries—five cents' worth of ginger cake on Sunday, and a nickel's worth of tobacco for her pipe on Satur-

day. She considered it a joy that at the end of her days of saving she could count her little bed-tick bank as a necessity to the nation.

The white people of the South will never understand us until they understand that is what we want. We want to be free, yes indeed, but we want to be utterly free in order that we may be bound by our own free will to complete bondage unto the common good in this Southland, and I prophesy today that your putting the yoke around our shoulders *with* you in this institution will bear fruit which will gladden your hearts while you live and be a blessing to the South after you have passed on.

Whites and Negroes Unite

I want to close by asking this question—what could have brought these groups of people together, black and white, man and woman? No dogma on earth, no system of thought conceivable by man. One thing only could have brought them together—reverence for human life and the desire to enhance the value thereof.

Each of these groups was engaged in that undertaking in his own way. And reverence for life brought them together. No man could have argued them together. No dogma could have brought them together, but the simple love of human life and the desire for the enhancement thereof has brought them into a practical brotherhood which is an inspiration to us all and a security in which we may have confidence.

In what better way could they symbolize the spirit of this enterprise than by the way in which they have done it? They have named it for James Hardy Dillard. I would have come down here simply to express my gladness that you named it after James Hardy Dillard—a southern white man who grew up and established himself in this city as a cultivated gentleman.

Led by the Noble Dillard

Under some conceptions of education, he could have put his fingers in his vest and have been content the rest of his life to be one of the satellites of southern Anglo-Saxon culture, but he did not do it.

He laid aside the coat of pride and humbled himself. Thinking it not a thing to be grasped after to be on equality with Anglo-Saxons, he

made himself a servant and walked around this Southland obedient to the needs of the children of slaves.

He left off talking Latin and did not even use big Latinized English words, but used simple language in order that he might make the truth clear to the humblest.

He made himself of no account among men as he walked around from village to village, helping to build our Negro schools, making friends for Negro education in places almost without a name.

Now he comes to a mature age, having humbled himself to be the servant of the lowly. Wherefore this community has highly exalted him, and has set his name on high in this university to be an inspiration to her young men from generation unto generation. They have named it after a man in whose breast burns the real meaning of university education.

No colored man who goes into this university will ever be able to come out and respect himself with his fingers in his vest declaring himself a satellite among the elite.

He will have to get down to actuality and look upon his education as an investment which the community has made in his life and justify himself by the service which he renders to those disadvantaged around him.

I think it is beautiful that they placed Dr. Dillard's picture first in the hospital. Day after tomorrow or the next day, there will come into that hospital an illiterate woman with her baby that will have cried out to her in the middle of the night. Seeing the perspiration breaking out like beads upon it and touching its fevered brow, she will have felt as if her heart would break with desire, knowing that what she wanted to do could not be done by her.

Passing through the corridor of that hospital, she will see the face of that mature, cultivated gentleman. And she will know that under the inspiration of his face men of mature training and culture will bend over that little black baby and will bring to its recovery the best that civilization has to give.

That is the meaning of the university. That is the beautiful expression of the life of James Hardy Dillard. I could wish nothing better for my son than that the spirit of James Hardy Dillard could be educated and disciplined into his life.

Genuineness in Education

By James Hardy Dillard

I WAS intensely surprised when I heard that a great Institution was to bear my name. I feel deeply sensible of the honor, and deeply grateful for the thought and good-will in the minds of those who proposed to bestow such unexpected honor. It seemed more than anything which I have done could possibly deserve. This city was my home for many years, and is still home in thought. While I actually lived here I was trustee of, and sincerely interested in, the welfare of the two excellent Institutions which are uniting in this splendid project. It is to these facts that I attribute the action of the Board of Trustees. Of course nothing could be more gratifying to me than the establishment of such an Institution and its establishment here in this city.

This is the first opportunity which I have had to express my thanks, and for this opportunity, if for no other reason I am most happy to be here and have part in these exercises. They are symbolical of a foundation which we trust will be of lasting benefit to this community, and to this whole Southern region of our country.

If the work goes on as it has begun there is no doubt that high success will follow. The Flint-Goodridge Hospital has won the admiration of all who have seen it. The highest professional men of the country have spoken of it with enthusiasm. This admiration embraces both the physical features of the Hospital and its efficient management under Mr. Dent and his corps of helpers. Its great service to the community seems assured. More than twenty-five years ago the famous surgeon of this city, Dr. Matas, said that just such a hospital was needed here.

Let us hope, and I think we may predict, that in time the Hospital will have a fitting mate by the establishment of a medical school which shall be as finely equipped and managed as is the Hospital. Such a school is needed here in the far South, and the fine management of the Hospital is a sort of warrant that a medical school here would be in good hands.

In this connection permit me to say that it has been a most happy fortune that as first President of the University a man of extraor-

dinary ability and character could be secured in the person of Dr. Will W. Alexander. He stands before the country as the embodiment of the sensible, wise coöperation which this Institution, in its inception and accomplishment, so notably represents. In no other way has he served better the cause he has at heart.

The University has also, it seems to me, been singularly fortunate in having a remarkable Board of Trustees, including some of the wisest educators of the country, and a remarkable coterie of workers as local members, such men as Mr. Stern, Bishop Jones, Mr. Howard, Mr. Lemann, Mr. Kearny, Dr. Taylor and Dr. La-Branche. Certainly the Board has made notable beginnings.

The coöperation manifested in the efforts which have brought about this result has been spoken of and approved throughout the country. It all seems to have been done in just the right way, without bluster, just done as a natural and needed thing to be done. Done in this way, it has had all the more effect as an illustration of good-will and coöperation in carrying forward a concrete proposition which appealed to people as pointing to something the doing of which seemed worthwhile. And so the Hospital was built, and we are here today to lay the corner stone of further building for another purpose, the purpose of promoting the thing we call education.

Of course it is not for me to make any suggestions in regard to any special work or courses which may be proposed for this University. It is not for me to speak of matters of management and curriculum. Those who have its future in their hands are more competent than I am to map its course. But I should like to say a brief word about that which in any field of education seems to me of paramount importance. It can be told in very few words and is almost absurdly simple. It is simply this, whether the work be making a table or dress, whether it be solving an example in Arithmetic or in Geometry, whether it be experimenting in a laboratory, or whether it be studying practical living problems, that what is done should be done in the spirit of genuineness, in the spirit of aspiration for perfect accomplishment. Perfection is a hard word. We may not reach it,

but we can aim at it. Sometimes it is reached. A teacher asked a little fellow how much is two and two. "Four," said the boy. "Very good," said the teacher. "No," said the boy, "it is perfect."

It seems to me that it is in this process of doing things with the aim to perfection that real education comes. The Institution which inspires, promotes, demands and rewards this kind of work is a really educational Institution. Please do not think that I am undervaluing the knowledge, the useful knowledge, that a student may acquire. The work may be in the line of the most practical, everyday sort of pursuits. I am only wishing to express my conviction that education in its real sense depends more on how the thing is done than on what the thing is. The difference lies in doing a thing just to get through with it and doing a thing with the determination to do it right.

This genuine sort of work, whether it be by hand or head, requires that the mind be put on it. In the Virgin Islands last year I watched a man working on a chair for which he was to receive seventy-five dollars. He had worked, and studied his profession, we may call it, two years in Denmark. As I watched him I could see that his mind was working as steadily as his hands. No work can be done right without, as the saying is, "putting your mind on it." I think we might say that the highest business of any Educational Institution is to promote this process of "putting your mind on it." To put it another way, it seems to me that the highest business of any Educational Institution is to require genuine work. It seems to me that the highest service that can be done for young people in an educational way is to help them acquire the power, and not only the power but the habit, of steady correct work and straight thinking. Given this, the sure rewards will be added, both in the practical things of life and in the beautiful things of life. Efficient industry

and highest art, both need as their basis the will to work steadily and the power of thinking straight. Now these powers and habits can be acquired in schools along with the acquirement of this or that special knowledge, and if they are not, the knowledge itself will be lacking in accuracy and reality.

What the world needs most is people who love accurate knowledge about things and conditions, people who see and face facts, people who can and will think straight about the facts and conditions that surround us. It is recognized that we are in the midst of a troubled time. Such people as I have described, that is, those who have been really educated, will not be fooled by nostrums and superficial remedies for the cure of troubles, whether individual troubles, or the larger troubles of nations and races. Such people will know that troubles between persons, troubles between nations, troubles between races, can be cured only in a way that is as old as it is new, and as new as it is old. It may be called the way of reality. It is the way told long ago by the prophet Micah: To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God.

There is no way to get the world on, no way to cure ills and hostilities and prejudices except by promoting straight thinking and right living, and we know of no way of doing this except through the happy means of real education and real religion. We have to keep on trying to learn to think right, speak right, and act right. This is the great lesson. It may seem to be a sort of invisible lesson, but it is none the less real. It is as real as a block of stone. The lesson is begun in years of school and college. It is for this that schools and colleges are built. It is for this that this corner stone is laid here today. It is laid in the hope that all that shall be done, within the walls that will arise, will tend to the promotion of this lesson of good thought, good work, and good will.

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